DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 128 147 RC 009 425

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TITLE Problems and Perspectives of School Development in the Rural Side.
INSTITUTION USSR Academy of Sciences, Novosibirsk.
REPORT NO Sem-15
PUB DATE Aug 76
NOTE 22p.; Paper presented at Seminar 15, "Rural Youth: Human Resource or Human Burden?" of the World Congress of Rural Sociology (4th, Torun, Poland, August 1976)

EDRS PRICE MF-$0.83 HC-$1.67 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Economic Development; *Educational Alternatives; Educational Needs; *Elementary Secondary Education; *Futures (of Society); *Program Development; *Rural Areas; Rural Urban Differences; Rural Youth; Small Schools; Socioeconomic Influences
IDENTIFIERS *USSR; *World Congress of Rural Sociology (4th)

ABSTRACT

Development of rural education in the USSR should not be based upon comparison with the USSR's urban education; rather, it should be perceived as an educational alternative with inherent advantages. The shift to compulsory secondary education as accomplished during the 1971-75 five-year period has established education as a major factor in the socioeconomic development of the USSR; wherein, education is perceived as both a means and a goal. The combination of economic necessity and social need for increased education is evidenced by the current growth rate of USSR education, and scientific and technological change in agriculture and the decline in rural population has made increases in the educational level of the rural population a State goal of primary importance. Currently, rural schools lag behind urban schools in terms of qualified educators; materials, facilities, and technological equipment; transportation; cultural advantages; and diversified curriculum. However, if perceived in terms of its own potential, the rural school could afford numerous advantages. Among these are opportunities to teach via: immediate closeness to nature; practical application; economic initiative and independence; diverse skills in classes of technical instruction; etc. Since rural education is inevitably associated with urban education, programs must be oriented toward future possibilities and the needs of the society rather than toward maintaining the status quo. (JC)

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PROBLEMS AND PERSPECTIVES OF SCHOOL DEVELOPMENT IN THE RURAL SIDE

Seminar 15: Rural Youth: Human Resource or Human Burden?

Novosibirsk
1976

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FOURTH WORLD CONGRESS FOR RURAL SOCIOLOGY
Toruń, August, 1976

RC009425

U.S.S.R. ACADEMY OF SCIENCES
Siberian Branch
INSTITUTE OF ECONOMICS

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Preprint

Novosibirsk
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Abstract

The main concern of the paper are ways for equalization between rural and urban school. How will school develop? Must it "catch up with" the urban? Rural school has many advantages over the urban and can go its own way outstripping the urban school without catching up with it. What are these advantages and how can they be employed in the future? By proposing a conceptual framework of rural school development the authors regard it as a point for discussion.

1. Public Education is a Factor in Economic and Social Progress

The matter of compulsory secondary education in our country was first stated in the Directives on the Fifth Five-year Plan of the Development of the U.S.S.R. for 1951-1955 approved by the XIX Congress of the CPSU (October 5-14, 1952).

Much progress has been made since that time: seven-grade schools were transformed into eight-grade, and the largest of them into 10-grade schools. New scientificatlly based curricula and syllabuses were introduced. Elementary education was reduced to three years instead of four, eight-grade education is given practically to all adolescents. A vital outcome of the 9th five-year period (1971-1975) is the completion of the shift to compulsory secondary education of the youth.

In the contemporary context the development of education-

al sphere became a crucial factor in economic progress, in national income growth (Avramov, 1969; Podoski and Piasecki, 1971). This facet is finding an ever increasing interest of economists. In the late 60s each rouble of national investment to education increased average national income by 4 roubles against 1 rouble 45 copecks in science and 38 copecks in material production (Trapeznikov, 1969; Komarov, 1972: 142-143). And the more recognized is high economic efficiency derived not only from specialized occupational training but from the system of comprehensive education too (Piasecki, 1971).

General education is something more than merely a basis for vocational and professional training of a technician, engineer, medical doctor, scholar. Under contemporary science-technological change it is a vital component in the skills of a blue collar and farm worker.

W. Wachowicz has shown by his studies that workers graduates of high comprehensive schools are much more efficient than graduates of craft schools, having no comprehensive education (Wachowicz, 1971). According to economic studies conducted in the South of the U.S.S.R., labour productivity of tractor operators 10-grade graduates was approximately 25-30% higher than of those with lesser extent of education.

We should emphasize that the efficiency of education is not measured exclusively by economic results. The criterion here in the socialist society is, above all, the adequacy to the task of all-round personality developing, of improvement of social structure and providing for high standard of teaching-educational process (Barz, 1974).

The specific features of education, its social nature is manifested in its functions (Meier, 1974). Firstly, educational system moulds personality. Spiritual wealth, morals and physical perfection of personality is our social ideal. In this sense, education is public good, independent value, a goal in itself; secondly, education is a vital factor in scientific-technological, economic and social progress,

i.e. means of material production growth and improvement of public relations.

Education taken as a goal and as a means is of special interest within systemic approach to rural development under socialism, since it is evident that practical strategy in educational policy will depend on which of the foregoing functions is accepted as principal.

If education is seen only as a means, it should be developed only to be adequate to the level of productive forces: possible are versions of sufficiency, excess or deficit of education. If education is seen only as a goal , it should be spread both in city and country, and not only equally but lavishly, and no excess of education is possible: the more, the better.

In the socialist society both of these education functions are implemented continually. We should note, however, that education, being a factor of productive forces growth and of productive relations, is, above all, the result of their development. Productive forces motivate, on the one hand, educational growth, provide for its material base, on the other, determine real limits to its scales, rates and proportions.

Educational level characterizes intellectual potential of a society, is an estimate of its progress and wealth. The combination of economic necessity and social need in increased education yields high results evidenced by growth rates of education in the U.S.S.R. (Table 1).

The educational level of population is composed of educacational attainments of each individual. And these attainments (years of education), in dynamic examination, cannot fall down, whereas educational level of population can go both "upward" and "downward" in various historical periods.

The population of a particular region gets educated both within their place of residence and without it. This applies also to the countryside. While elementary, less-than-secondary and, to a greater extent, secondary education results from the functioning of rural schools, higher levels of education

Table 1

Amount of education of the Soviet population per 1000 persons aged 10 and over, persons (Itogi.., 1972:206-207)

Years	college	attended college without completing	specialized high	comprehensive high	less-than-high	elementary
Urbanites						
1959	40	17	68	92	252	298
1970	62	20	91	156	263	250
1970 in % to 1959	155.0	117.6	133.8	169.6	104.4	83.9
Ruralites						
1959	7	5	29	31	184	321
1970	14	5	36	67	210	354
1970 in % to 1959	200.0	100.0	124.1	216.1	114	110.3

(specialized high and higher) are given in cities. By training manpower for rural society, city motivates youth cityward migration attracting them by broader job opportunities, "takes away" the mostly educated part of population. Hence, growth of education among rural people is a very complicated, contradictory, rather lengthy and at the same time urgent process.

The penetration of scientific-technological change into all branches of national economy, including farming, on the one hand, and the decline in rural population proportion, on the other, lead to the necessity to provide agricultural production with workers of high skills. Thus, rise in educational level of rural population is a state goal of primary importance.

Among the determinants of manpower reproduction, migrational flows, social mobility an important role is played

by rural school. It essentially affects the cultural image of rural dwellers, their life style.

2. Social Differentiation Between Rural and Urban Schools

Educational differentiation of urban and rural population, under rural and urban conditions, is one of the manifestations of persisting social rural-urban differentiation. On the whole, rural school is considerably lagging behind the urban. Though teaching syllabuses in city and country are the same, rural pupils get lower knowledge than their urban counterparts.

Among the reasons for urban-rural differentiation in schools Miroslaw Szymański lists the following: 1) traditions; 2) objective difficulties in the organization of education caused by population dispersion on vast territories; 3) differentials in socioeconomic and cultural conditions (Szymański, 1968). The latter seem to be the crucial cause. Rural-urban school differentiation in the U.S.S.R. are, in our judgement, as follows.

1. As for most teachers living in urban places is more attractive than in rural, the quality of rural school masters is lower. This situation is aggravated by lesser opportunities for rational utilization of available teaching manpower. Small schools typical of rural areas fail to provide teachers with full work loading in one subject, to use advantages of labour division and cooperation in teaching. School masters have lesser opportunities to borrow teaching methods from one another.

2. Rural school in general has a worse material technological equipment (school buildings, workshops, technical aids etc.).

3. School children often have to go long distance to school by walking or by bus which enhances difficulties (particularly, during slush and frost) in meeting the task of compulsory attendance and has poor consequences on performance.

4. Social setting in which rural school is functioning is far poorer than urban in opportunities for cultural development, cultural level of families, diverse ways of effective influence on school children etc. (Kwieciński, 1972; Kwieciński, 1975).

5. An essential advantage of urban to rural schools is diversity in kinds of education, i.e. specialized and vocational technical high schools. Urban children and adolescents unlike rural have a practically unlimited choice of learning institutions ranging from dancing to physical-mathematical plus plethora of extra-scholastic institutions: athletic, musical, painting schools; young naturalists' stations, societies of young technicians. The introduction of specialized and vocational technical high schools are the most important and promising innovations in our educational system over the last 10-15 years.

According to the foregoing, rural youth have no equality with urban in opportunities for all-round personality developing, occupational choice and implementation of life plans. Therefore, the advantageous terms for rural applicants on college competitive entrance examinations are socially just but they do not help to raise general demands on high quality of knowledge to persons aspiring for higher education.

According to this, one of the most crucial social problems in our society is that of bridging the gap between rural and urban school. The principal aspects of this problem are the subject for later discussion.

In the system of factors determining the efficiency of a teaching process in an educational establishment the decisive are teachers. They can be examined from the standpoint of their quantitative and qualitative characteristics, professional activity and their attachment to it.

One of the main quantitative characteristics of teachers is their absolute number per certain number of pupils as well as per one educational establishment.

Main qualitative characteristics are their skills and immobility.

The required number must guarantee universal character and accessibility of education; high skills guarantee its first-rate quality, equal opportunities for rural and urban youth in life chances, working activity and getting higher education.

Over the years of the Soviet power deep changes have occurred in quantitative and qualitative composition of teaching manpower. Thus, in 1927-1928 academic year there were 347 thousand teachers of comprehensive schools in the U.S.S.R., toward 1940-1941 they were thrice as many (1 million 43 thousand), at present there are about three million teachers in the schools of our country.

Concurrently with the increase, there takes place undeviating improvement in teachers' quality. In 1950 as little as 14.2% of teachers in the U.S.S.R. were college graduates, in 1960 this figure reached 33.4%, in 1970 52.7%. The composition of rural teachers is changing respectively. Thus, while in 1950 the percentage of teachers college graduates was in the countryside one fourth as large as in city, at present it is already three-fifths: in 1970 urban teachers college graduates made up 63.4%, rural ones 44.5%. Substantial as this progress may be, the countryside has not yet achieved what was in city in 1960. In other words, by the crucial indicator of teachers' professional competence the rural side is lagging behind city by a decade.

Nowadays there are real chances to extend higher education to all teachers on part-time and extension basis. In 1980 all school teachers will have to have higher education. Special attention should be concentrated on elementary school teachers among whom, on national scales, only 15% are college graduates. It happened so that the younger the children, the less educated teachers work with them. T. Wiśniewski, however, has concluded that high costs of teachers' college training in Poland proved to be unjustified as teaching in elementary schools was not improved. This must be attributed, however, to two facts. First, new teaching recruitment joined the old unchanged system of elementary education (Wiś-

niewski, 1972). Second, two-year teachers' junior colleges are more like specialized high schools than higher learning institutions.

The authors of contemporary studies devoted to children's early development argue that it is necessary to raise up sharply educational and cultural level of teachers not only in primary schools but in preschool institutions too.

The specific features of rural school and, chiefly, its small size make it necessary to have unjustifiably large number of teachers. The smaller the school size, the more teachers are needed. In urban areas one teacher accounts on the average for 20.5 pupils, and in rural areas 16.2. Vast national scales of higher education for teachers have not been so far able to saturate rural school with teaching personnel. Besides, rural schools, on account of their small size, cannot use teachers effectively: teachers working in small schools having no standard work loading in the subjects for which they were specialized are forced to teach 2-3 more subjects for which they were not trained; in very small elementary schools teachers teach two or three forms. All this leads to teachers' overloading and has negative consequences on children's education.

The difficulties in the formation and utilization of teaching manpower are not only due to the specificity of rural school, but also to rural cultural and living conditions. A considerable part of graduates of teaching colleges and universities are unwilling to work in the countryside, and many of them as soon as they build up 3-year seniority move away, not infrequently changing their profession. Household difficulties, the need to get married force young rural women teachers to move to city.

The problem of further improvements in economic status of and work motivation for teacher is one of the most important. The development of a complex of socioeconomic and educational measures for providing a mighty influx to the countryside of most creative and promising teaching workers and their continuous retreading in accordance with contemporary demands should be seen a key task of primary impor-

tance.

Productivity, or efficiency of educational system functioning is related to qualitative characteristics of its elements one of which is material-technological equipment.

Material-technological equipment of education is a combination of architectural-construction building and technical teaching aids.

Constructions and buildings are characterized, first, by properties common for all constructions: building materials, presence/absence and kind of heating, lighting and plumbing facilities, design project and time of building, general aesthetic features, trimmings, conveniences; secondly, by properties of an educational establishment proper: purposes of halls etc. The main feature of material equipment is its direct relation to the size: capacity (number of places for students per one shift) or attendance (actual number of students). Here we can speak about normally packed buildings, overcrowded and empty. Apart from this, to characterize special properties of buildings, it is necessary to mention their location in communities of different kinds, their distance from students' homes, transportation means connecting them with villages and towns, i.e. to study educational establishments network. Physical-spatial organization of educational establishments network is of crucial importance, especially for rural school, since just school location determines its size and, ultimately, all material-technological equipment.

At present about 80% of all schools in the U.S.S.R. are located in rural areas accounting for about 50% of pupils. The average occupancy of rural school is 158 persons, urban 694; rural elementary school 27 persons (urban 106 persons), eighth-grade rural school 188 persons (urban 468), high rural 476 (urban 952) (Norodnoie obrazovanie... , 1971:44-46).

The rural side has always been marked by predominance of small-size schools. At present the percentage of elementary schools in rural areas is 49.9% with as little as 8.6% of total school children in them. Today the notions "elemen-

tary" and "small" rural school are synonymous. About 40% of rural elementary schools teach as few as 15 pupils each. Many eight-grade and secondary rural schools are also striking by their sizes: about 20% of eight-grade schools teach under 100 pupils, about 18% of secondary schools have under 280 pupils.

If 7-8% of pupils were transferred from elementary to nearest eight-grade or secondary schools, it would be possible to close about 40% of schools (which makes up approximately 60 thousand). Economic and educational effect of this transformation would be very high. The trouble is that poorly equipped small-size school gives second-rate education and is expensive: the cost of education of one pupil in a small-sized school is 4 or 5 times as high than in the large. The process of consolidating pupils in larger schools is retarded, however, by serious problems of rural settlement pattern which in their turn are related to specific features of farm production. Further consolidation of rural settlements will undoubtedly lead to school enlargement, but the issue of outstripping rates of concentration of rural schools merits special investigation since it is of a strategic nature.

Over a third of rural schools are accommodated in buildings made according to up-to-date modular designs, about a half in good buildings of previous years and almost a third in buildings needing major repair and dilapidated. By 1981 7 million school places, among them 4.5 million in rural areas, will be introduced thus creating a stock of school buildings of full value.

The perspectives of scientific and technological progress in education are connected with introduction of teaching automated systems for information search, television, lingaphone laboratories. And despite the present-day situation when a teacher in a single-set elementary school and head of rural educational department are confronted with problems of repairing huts ("mimni-schools"), of finding blackboards such as it would be possible to write distinctly with chalk

on them and, sometimes, of impossibility to provide pupils with ammeters, just rural school, much more than urban, needs scientific technical transformation . The rural school can surmount its lagging behind only with the help of large computing centres, able to service large regions, schools and students located dozens of kilometres off. Regular television communication with onlookers' feedback is very much needed by schools located at long distances from major cultural centres and dispersed from the Pacific and Ice Oceans as far as Buryat steppes and the Altai Mountains.

This technological transformation has already started in urban schools; all efforts, however, are to be made lest this process should be too "late" for the rural ones which are attended by half of all children and adolescents of the country.

3. Perspectives in Rural School Development

Conventionally, sociologist and educationalist both mention usually only disadvantages of the rural school. Is it justified?

In effect, rural school has many advantages over the urban: a) the possibility of carrying out teaching process in immediate closeness to the nature; b) the possibility to teach natural science in conjunction with practical application of knowledge to growing various crops, animal breeding and using a wide variety of modern farm machines; c) more favourable opportunities for the development in pupils of economic initiative and independence; d) more favourable opportunities for pupils to obtain diverse skills and occupations in classes of technical instruction and in workshops; e) fresh air, fields, forests are very good setting for physical and aesthetic development (the well-known school of Sukhomlinski is a good illustration); f) more opportunities to provide for teachers-parents col-

laboration in educating new generation.

On the other hand, we should not overlook deficiencies of urban school though they are not often mentioned.

Whatever architects' and planners' art, whatever efforts of municipal bodies to create and preserve green plots in cities, for all their vital importance, will remain only small islands in a wide ocean. The present-day large industrial megalopolis will never turn a garden; maximum to be attained are gardens in a city.

The urban school surrounded closely from all sides by multi-storeyed houses, with asphalt pavement, buses and trolleybuses under its windows, the school which has not as much as a sport ground, green lawn, to say nothing of a park or experimental kitchen-garden and orchard farm, cannot implement physical education (taken in a broad sense), cannot warrant good state of health of children. Windows in this school are always closed because of motors rumble and smoke smell which may come through them. On the pavement before the school front door there is a metal enclosure to prevent children from rushing out to the traffic road and getting run over.

The rural school does not face any of these problems. Just because it is provided with conditions which are most favourable for teaching, vocational training and development, the future belongs to it.

We may well expect that already in the near future rural school problem will yield to the problem of urban school with its ferro-concrete and asphalt setting.

Such problems are already suffered in the world. E. g. in the U.S.A., England and other countries with megalopolises most aristocratic schools have already moved to fringes. The upper classes are building for their children school-parks, boarding-schools in picturesque environments. And it is not a mere chance that in this country also large university and research centres, campuses are more often than not built in the lap of nature rather than in central urban districts. Where will the schools of future Communist

society be built? In any case, the task is different than urbanizing rural schools. However, even the best present-day schools of the largest cities are very far from the ideal suggested by not even fancy but sober considerations and quite real alternatives.

Two methodological conclusions ensue from this: first, rural-urban school differences should not be taken as the need of pulling the rural school up to the urban, i.e. to regard the rural school as under-developed urban. In the long run there should be a new type of single school integrating merits of the both.

Second, we should go further than merely compare rural and urban school and ascertain the former's lagging behind, but to recognize that the future of rural school is much associated with the state of education in city and that rural school exercises influence on education in city. Only by taking into account the development of the whole, i.e. national public education can we construct special hypotheses of rural school development.

These methodological statements must be remembered in attempts to forecast the long-run development of rural school.

What prediction periods are reasonable? Out to 1990-2000? Yes, primarily the period of 15-25 years. But in doing this, strategic points of departure relating to more distant periods should be worked out, if only on tentative basis, because the system of education has very high momentum: today we drink what we have brewed in this field more than two decades ago. The crop we shall harvest in two decades is being sowed today. Only then all faults and deficiencies will come to light and some more decades may be needed to remove them. School buildings have a long lifetime. The ones built now will endure 80-100 years and some of them even more. And if they turn inadequate, it will be not easy to replace them. A teacher who has assimilated certain didactic traditions, norms, principles, methods will do in accordance to them for 30-35 years. And, which is all impor-

tant, the present-day school children will live through the second half of XXI century! According to W.Wolter, it makes sense to evaluate major shifts in education only provided the prediction covers not less than a three decade period (W.Wolter, 1968). Hence, the phrase "the future is born today" is especially true in case of education.

The third methodological conclusion follows from this: predictions and programs must be oriented not so much to the status quo as to the future possibilities and needs of the society, i.e. not so much to the steady, "time-honoured" as to the freshest, advanced or even "crazy" ideas.

The novel, by its very essence, is always something not quite sufficiently tested. Very often seemingly attractive and promising ideas, after testing, prove to be groundless. So, this innovation-orientation is often hazardous. Then , what is to be done? It seems there is the only answer: to analyze as many alternatives as possible. Only in this way we can develop a program for rural school development which would be adequate to the scales of practical tasks of communist construction.

On the surface these problems may appear too far fetched for a "serious" practician with a multiplicity of current tasks. In effect, the point here is to choose a motion trajectory for rural school for the decades to come. It, however, depends in a crucial way on the aim taken today.

To summarize, rural school is not only the yesterday of public education but, in a sense, its tomorrow. According to this, the essence of the conception is not that rural school must catch up with the urban (practically it never can achieve that if only because urban school is ever developing and running "ahead"), but rather that its development (in parallel with the traditional one) must go its own way. Just in the open country locality rural complexes of "Artek"and "Orlionok" type or of Cuban school campuses type must appear already in the foreseeable future. Situated in a picturesque place (forest, park, river or lake), commodious, warm, designed for several thousand children,

more like a small town than a school, where children live and study at least a week or even an entire academic term, without feeling home-sick - such a school will be attractive both for rural and urban parents. The combination of unique landscapes and modern amenities - this is the future for school.

It stands to reason, we do not want to say that all urban schools are to be closed and children transferred to rural ones. No, many urban schools will remain much like many research centres and universities remain in cities when new ones are developed in suburbs. The point is that it is necessary to work out a conceptual framework about rural school development for a rather long run (five or six decades and over). During the period of the organization of the Siberian Branch of the Soviet Academy of Sciences the Lenin prize winner Professor G.S. Migirenko (the then Secretary of Party Local organization of the Novosibirsk Research Centre) advanced a slogan: "In some vital inquiry lines to surpass the bourgeois science without overtaking it". The essence of this slogan was not to go by beaten track but instead come on front positions by achieving quite new, more effective solutions. Just this principle must be at the core of our development plans for our rural school.

Rural school not merely reflects rural-urban differences. It "has been, is and will be a base for rural social advance", as P.M. Masherov , First Secretary of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Byelorussia, noted at the All-Union scientific-theoretical conference on Agrarian Policy of the CPSU at the Current Stage (Pravda, March 26, 1975). The significance of rural school as a factor in wiping out essential rural-urban differences will increase as the level of its educational activity increases and as education is combined with productive activity.

To provide a successful shift to compulsory high school attendance in the countryside a number of problems have to be solved of which of primary importance is school conso-

lidation. Three alternative ways may be outlined for long run.

The first is for school to follow the settlement pattern. As settlements are consolidated and population is pooled in them, school is naturally also consolidated. School sizes, their capacities are adjusted to the number of eligible children in school service area. The school outlook, its material-technological base on the whole correspond to the urbanization level of a settlement and capacities of farm enterprises on whose territory they are situated. Schools are on walking distances from children's homes.

The second way is to consolidate schools ahead of settlements, in which case, according to long-term development plans for communities thousands of the smallest schools are closed, new ones built or old enlarged, their material equipment base strengthened from the resources of several instead of a single farm enterprises. At the same time the areas of school services are significantly expanded, and children of communities at a distance of over 3 km either daily come to school by a special bus, or live there.

The third way is to construct schools, or school campuses directly in the lap of nature, without relation to rural settlement pattern. These campuses may be situated in settlements themselves or near them, but by all means in picturesque places, having transport connections with cities and villages, being large enough (accommodating several thousand students), being designed and made according to mostly uptodate plans. They may be like best health resorts of the country. These school campuses with experimental farms, workshops, athletic buildings, stations of young naturalists and technicians, musical and other classes of aesthetic education, brilliant consumer and medical services may become true "factories of intellect". In such schools, through mighty efforts of educationalist teams high quality of education can be achieved.

Educational industry is today not more than a theoretical problem but "the future will not come by itself if we do

not take measures", as was once said. The transition to universal compulsory secondary education, particularly in open country localities, calls for considerable improvement and, in many cases, for radical change in school network, for closing thousands of small, expensive and badly educating schools, creating uptodate large schools and boarding schools, which cost more apiece, but taken together are not only cheaper economically, but are many times as profitable socially and educationally.

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Over the last five years a number of important party-governmental decisions regarding public education have been adopted, and among them those about further improvements in the work of rural comprehensive school. The crucial task for research workers is not only to make concrete suggestions for better functioning of rural school, but also working out soundly based long-run projections.

The discussion of concepts about rural school future development is an important stage in long-run forecasting. This paper was just meant by authors to promote discussions which are in this case both desirable and necessary.

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PROBLEMS AND PERSPECTIVES OF SCHOOL DEVELOPMENT IN THE RURAL SIDE

Signed to be printed 2.07.1976
Paper format 60x84 1/16
Volume 1.2 printed sheets
Responsible for the issue L.A.Khakhulina

Order No. 182 100 copies

Mimeographed at the Institute of Economics & Industrial Engineering, Siberian Branch of the U.S.S.R. Academy of Sciences

Novosibirsk

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